



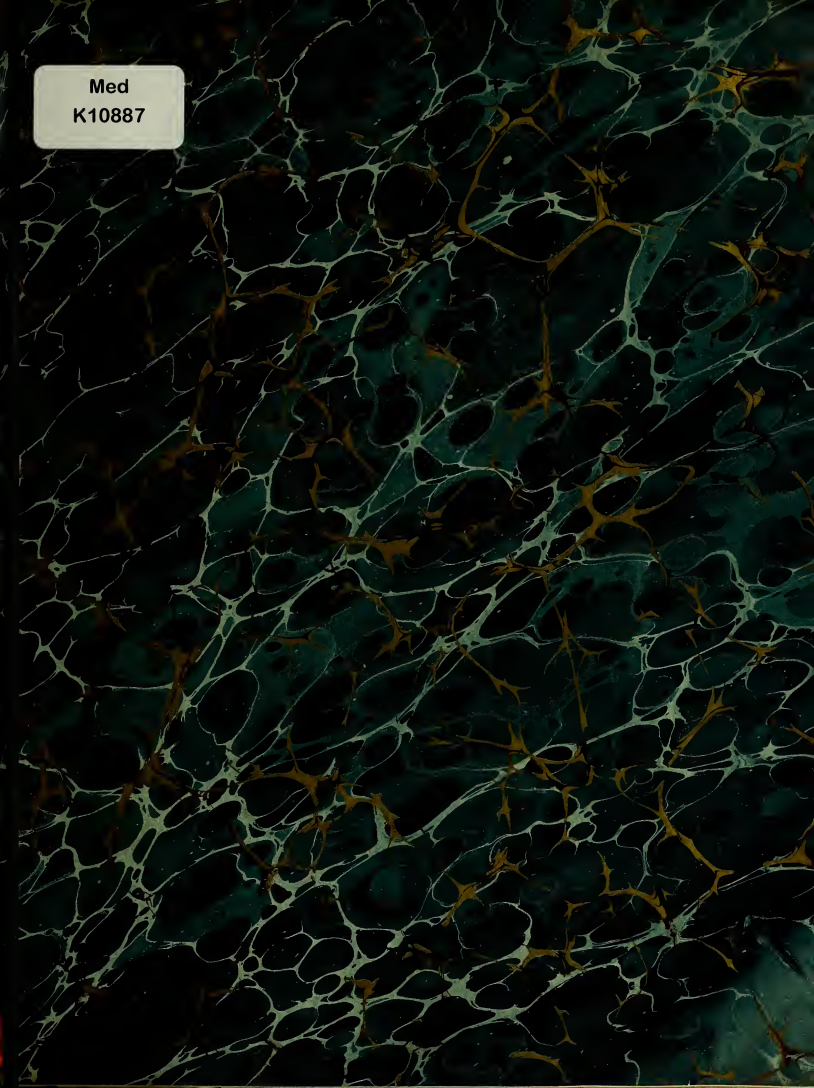
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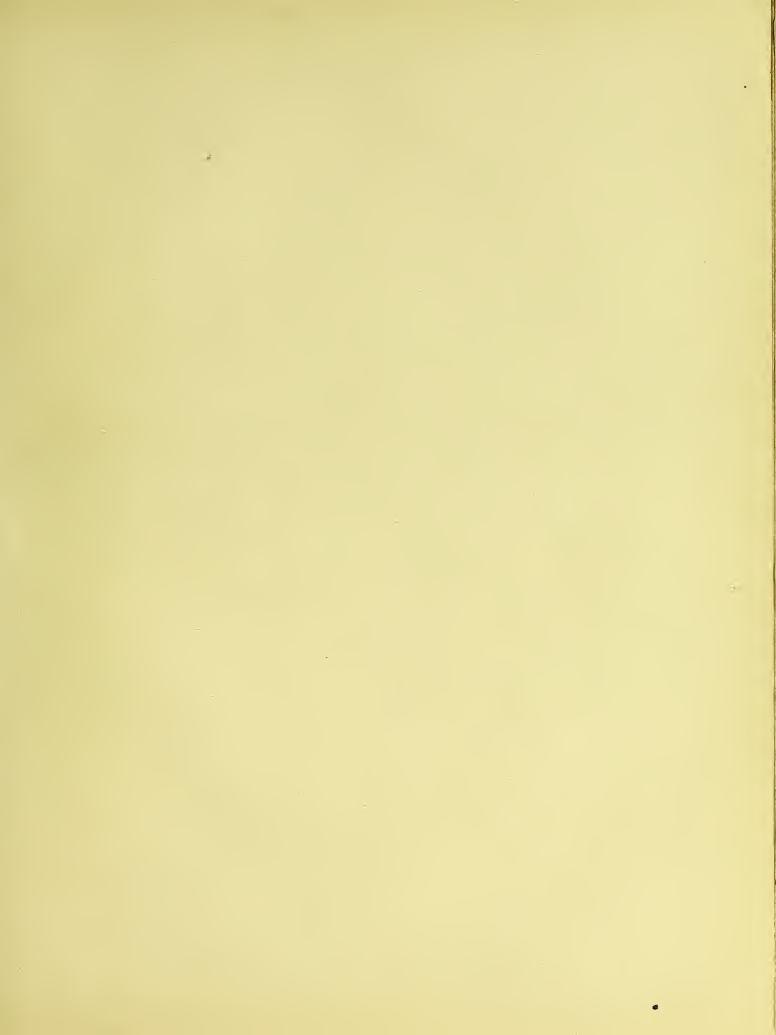
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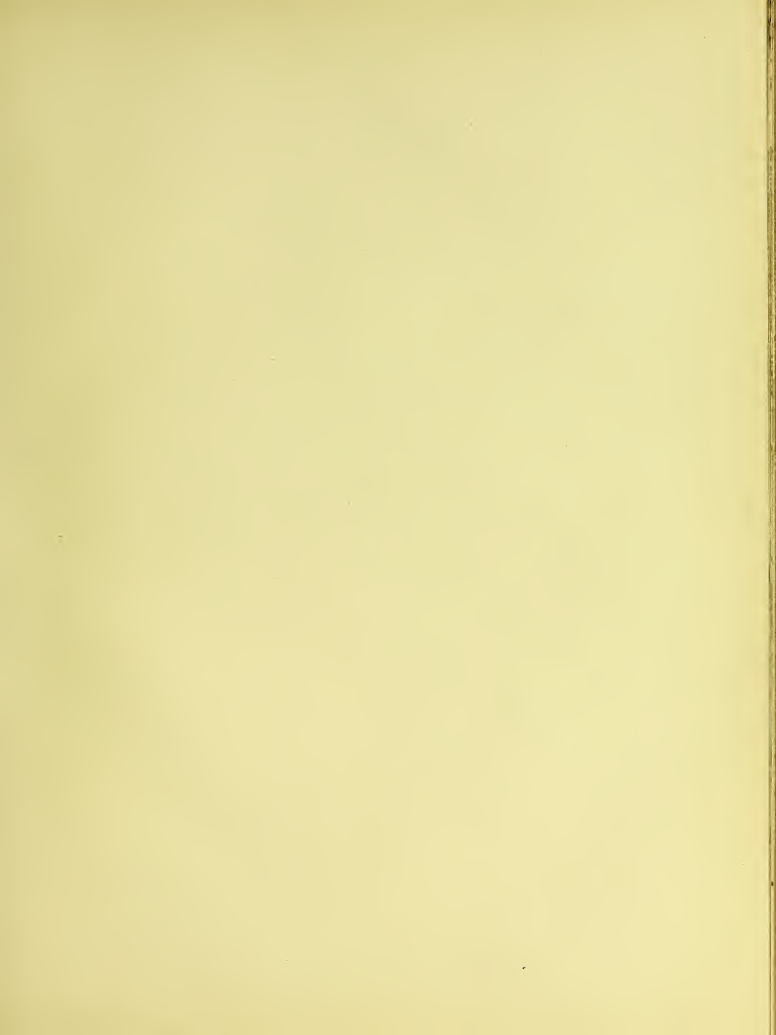


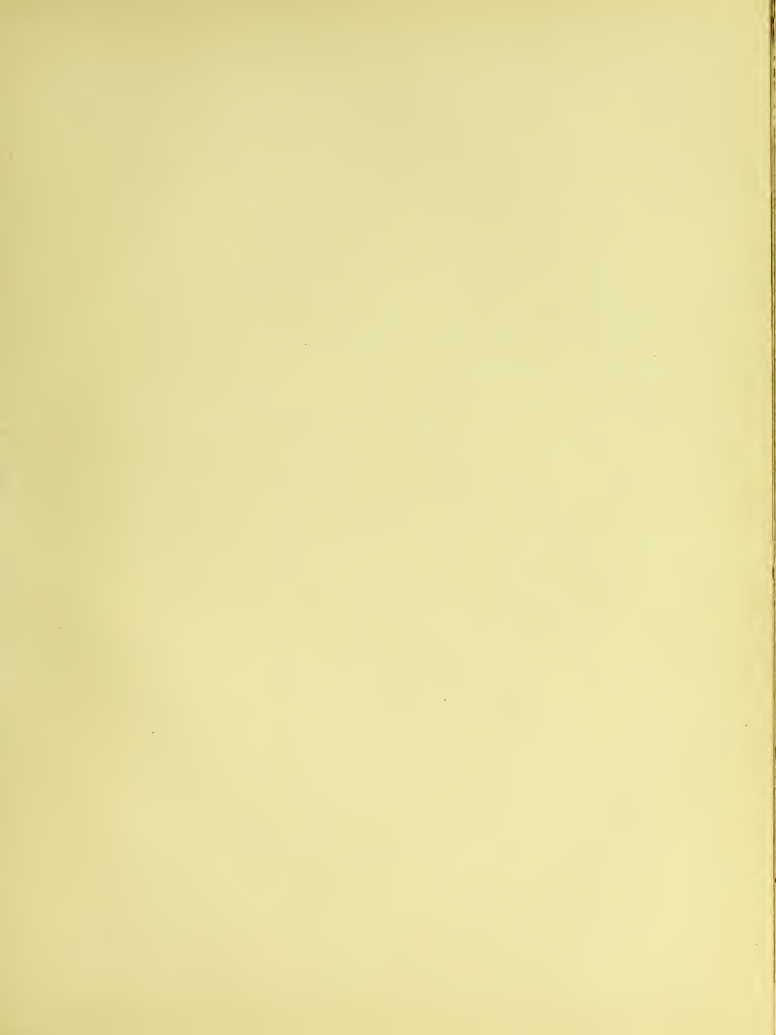












DANCING,
AS A MEANS OF
PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

WITH
REMARKS ON DEFORMITIES, AND THEIR
PREVENTION AND CURE.

BY
MRS. ALFRED WEBSTER,
OF BATH.

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ON DANCING :

ITS USES AND ABUSES.

THE object of this little book is to point out the many advantages of Dancing as an educational exercise—to endeavour to rescue it from the censure cast upon it in consequence of its abuses—to show that, properly taught and practised, it is the very best safeguard against the evils of over mental education, to which young ladies are so subject—to describe its advantages in harmonising the motions of the body, so as to produce habits of graceful ease upon all occasions—and to prove

that it has very decided effects, directly and indirectly, upon the mind; by, firstly, making the body a healthy and vigorous organ for the mind's development; and, secondly, by inculcating the practice of courtesy and politeness (with which it should ever be attended), indirectly inducing its votaries to adopt those habits of self-denial and self-restraint which are so necessary to civilised society, and the best definition of which is to be found in the precept, "Do unto others as ye would be done unto."

Taking higher views of the utility of Dancing than is usual, my remarks on it in my lessons have repeatedly elicited a wish that they might be reduced to a more tangible form. This request has latterly become so frequent, that it must serve as my apology, if an apology be necessary, for thus making my appearance before the public.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ROOM DANCING
AND STAGE DANCING.

IN the remarks I am about to make, it will be observed that I set aside theories that have become dear to their teachers from old associations, and which are, and doubtless will be, clung to by many professors; though I trust I shall be able to show that they are the cause of much misrepresentation as to the art in general, and most prejudicial to the progress of private teaching in particular.

If we inquire what Dancing is, we shall find that it is merely the natural movements of the body subjected to rhythmical restraint, as sound becomes music under similar control. The name of Dancing was doubtless originally given to those

involuntary, impulsive movements of the body occasioned by the exuberant animal spirits of childhood, (which are analogous to the sportiveness of the young of all animals,) and to the unrestrained manifestations of joy by those of riper years at some new and pleasurable sensation, when the limbs would as naturally spring into the dance as the voice would burst into the song. I must not linger to tell of its early adoption as a mode of heathen worship, of its introduction into the Jewish ritual, of its days of honour among the Greeks, or of its decline among the Romans; but come at once to our own days.

Those ladies who have witnessed the choregraphic displays at the Operas, will, I feel sure, agree with me that it is high time a strong line of demarcation should be drawn between Stage and Room Dancing. The former has doubtless great attractions, owing to the ability of celebrated artistes; but, however

calculated to excite our wonder on the Stage, it has most assuredly nothing in it to invite us to imitate it in our Drawing Rooms,—while the largeness of the movements, the unceasing pirouetting, the ungracefulness of many of the attitudes, the unnatural turning out of the legs, and the absence of story or meaning in many of the “pas,” all tell, in my opinion, a sad tale of the decline of the art which has been called the “poetry of motion.” Many of these extreme positions are still taught in Room Dancing by those professors who have been on the Stage, and by many who have not; hence the objection often raised, that it is quite unfitted to impart to children the bearing of ladies and gentlemen, and that it is worse than useless as a means of preventing or removing bad habits or personal deformity. In this way the art is condemned and its teacher discarded.

In the hints I have thrown out relative to a

more natural system of "positions" for Room Dancing, and in the manner in which I have treated of the advantages which are to be expected from a more extended use of Dancing as an educational exercise, my desire has been to raise in public estimation the art I teach, and consequently to improve the position of its teachers; but to do this I must again express my conviction, that a stronger line than at present exists must be drawn between Stage and Room Dancing.

Room Dancing should be to the body what education is to the mind—the development of its different faculties to the highest state of perfection. It is physical education in its most refined form. When early employed, its good effects can be discerned in almost every movement of the body, and under its influence, the awkwardness and rudeness so often found in young persons, give place to habits of elegance and propriety.

Just as good education gives a right bias and a truthful direction to the mind, does judicious instruction in Dancing impart a pleasing deportment and graceful habits to the body.



ON THE WANT OF EXERCISE IN FEMALE

EDUCATION.

EVERY reflecting mother must have observed with pain, how many hours her daughters are compelled to sit at their studies, the greater portion of the period being occupied in writing. During the whole of this time the spine is bent on one side, and the chest contracted. If not engaged in writing, they are taken to practise the piano-forte: here again the back, having no support, becomes weary and sinks on one side, a position still further induced by the much greater exercise given to the right hand than to the left. When worn out with music, (which should be a recreation,) they, as a change, go to drawing; and here the same stoop-

ing, the same indolence of one hand and activity of the other, produce the same result; and so the education of young ladies is constantly carried on. What are the almost universal consequences? General debility, curvature of the spine, pallid faces, and spiritless forms. When it is remembered that this system is maintained for so large a portion of every day, and that during the period of growth, when the human form is so susceptible to good or evil habits, can we wonder at the constant complaint at so many of the rising female generation being crooked? But how might all this have been prevented? The answer is simple. By a due blending of bodily with mental education, by a proper use of exercise to stimulate the unused and flaccid muscles of the body, and by the use of Dancing as a cheerful relaxation to the overstrained mind. Here let me quote an extract from a lecture delivered by Sir Benjamin Brodie, as

powerfully advocating my ideas on the subject. I should premise that he is speaking of the frequent occurrence of lateral curvature of the spine. He says :

“I have told you that this curvature is met with very frequently in private practice, and much more rarely in hospitals and dispensaries. It is one of the penalties of a high degree of civilization, a disease almost peculiar to those who have assumed to themselves the title of the better classes of society, though the more affluent classes seems to be the most appropriate appellation. It is not difficult to conceive that the advantages which young women of the affluent classes possess should be counterbalanced by certain physical disadvantages. They are in a great degree confined to close and heated rooms. In large towns, the habits of society prevent them from taking more than a very moderate quantity of exercise in the open air; and

even in the country (with a few exceptions) they enjoy much less freedom in this respect than their poorer neighbours. Thus, while their bodily powers are too little exercised, their minds are often exercised too much. Even in private education under a governess, the hours which they spend in study of one kind or another for the most part exceed those during which their brothers are similarly occupied at school; and at some schools, especially at what are called finishing schools, the business of mental education is carried to such an extent that the girls have scarcely any leisure for recreation. If they go out of doors at all, it is in too formal and decorous a manner to answer any really useful purpose.

“Let us not blame the ladies who preside over these establishments as being the authors of this erroneous system. To them it is as irksome as it is to their pupils. The fault lies altogether with the

parents who send their daughters to school, expecting that within a given period of time they should obtain a certain amount of accomplishments, such as cannot be crammed into them without sacrificing what is really more important to this one object. It might, indeed, be further urged that the injury thus inflicted on them is not merely physical; that the mind suffers as well as the body; that mere learning, without having leisure for reflection, tends not to strengthen the mind, but to weaken the intellect. But this is none of our business; it is only the physical injury that I refer at present."

The use of Dancing is to prevent the evils above described. But to do so, its teaching must take a far wider range than is usual. It should comprise exercises by which the whole muscular system is invigorated; practice in movements calculated to give a firm yet graceful air in walking and a ladylike manner in entering and leaving a room;

a constant inculcation of habits of urbanity; and, lastly, instruction in such dances as are becoming to a lady, either in the home circle or in the ball room.

In such a case as that described by Sir Benjamin Brodie, what is the general course pursued? When the parents are thoroughly alarmed at the discovery that the health and figure of their children are giving way, they hurry to a dancing master or other teacher of exercises, and hope, in a few lessons at intervals, say twice a week, to undo the evil that has insidiously worked its way hour by hour, day by day, and year by year. Nor does this absurdity yet reach its climax; for at the same time that the poor children are receiving their stinted portion of exercise, it is rendered distasteful to them by a constant system of scolding, while the pernicious causes which produced the evil are persevered in with unrelenting inveteracy.

THE USUAL SYSTEM OF TEACHING DANCING NOT
SUFFICIENT TO OBVIATE SUCH EVILS.

I WILL next endeavour to prove that Dancing, as generally taught, is totally inefficient as a remedial exercise. Imagine a weakly girl — her chest contracted, her chin projected, and her spine giving way. How is she treated? Her lesson is commenced with an effort to make her place herself in the "*first position*," that is, to turn her feet out in a straight line sideways, with the heels touching! Can anything be conceived more absurd? In nine cases out of ten, teachers who have been practising this position all their lives fail to accomplish it with ease; and what must be its effects on a tottering frame? Certainly anything but to give that

feeling of firmness and self-confidence necessary to remedy deformities or to render awkwardness less awkward. It may be necessary that an opera dancer should force his or her feet out in such an unnatural manner; but in a lady or gentleman it is simply ridiculous.

The feet, at the first position of Room Dancing, should form an angle of 130 degrees. The necessity of having a firm base for the body will be more obvious, if we consider that even to *stand still* a large amount of muscular action is necessary. The head has to be supported by the spine; each bone of the spine has to rest upon that beneath it; the whole vertebral column has to be balanced between the hips; the legs have unflinchingly to bear all this; and lastly, the feet have to support the whole superincumbent load. If, then, the feet are so placed that, as a base, their supporting power is lessened nearly two thirds, can it be supposed

that they will properly perform their office? This shows the great impropriety of allowing children to stand long in the same position, as the muscles, in their efforts to support the bones, become fatigued and relax; thus the body gives way, and thus the figure receives its first tendency to distortion. I would also here enter my protest against teaching a lady to stand or dance at the "*fifth position*," that is, to bring the feet in close parallel lines, for example, with the heel of the right foot touching the point of the left, and the heel of the left foot against the little toe of the right. Any person who will stand in this position for a few moments will be more convinced of its inexpediency for Room Dancing than by many pages of arguments.

The Dancing lesson, then, should be commenced by placing the pupil firmly on her feet, with the bust well balanced upon the hips, the chest thrown

forward, the waist drawn in, and the shoulders pulled down, in order that the head may have free and unfettered motion. When a good standing position is established, the pupil may be advanced to exercises for walking, which should form a material part of a Dancing lesson, and no time should be considered misspent that is passed in giving a young lady a firm and dignified carriage. I would here recommend the abolition of the phrase, "Turn out your toes," from the technical vocabulary, and that the pupil should be at once taught that there is but one joint in the leg which allows of a rotatory motion, namely, the hip; and consequently that, in all movements in walking and dancing, it is necessary to move from the hip, and thus obtain a habit of turning out the whole leg to the angle before described. If this is neglected, and an attempt is made to turn out the feet alone, the ankle bone is forced over the shoe, and a deformity

occasioned which has by many been attributed to Dancing, but which can only have arisen from it when taught by professors ignorant of their vocation, and who have tried to turn out the toes by stocks and other forcing means, without knowing that they were inflicting an outrage on Nature which she would certainly resent.

Drilling, as taught by military men, I consider singularly unfitted for ladies, whose figures, being wider at the hips than men's, prevent their elbows from being thrown back into the military position without passing the line of the centre of gravity, which compels the head or waist (and sometimes both) to be projected forward to preserve equilibrium, and thus establishes a "poke." The stiffness of the drill is not calculated to improve the movements of a lady, and the class of men usually employed for instructors is as little likely to improve her manners.

In speaking of walking, (one of the best antidotes to too much mental education,) I would strongly recommend its being made a recreation in every sense of the word. Let it not be the melancholy procession too often met, in which children are made to walk, as task-work, for a certain length of time, without the mind having the least pleasurable excitement. Let the walk always be associated with an object. Let there be a Hill to climb, a View to see, the Fields to gain for an hour's unrestrained freedom. Let Botany, Geology, and many other amusing and instructive pursuits, be seized upon as the means of conveying a cheerful stimulus to the mind, as well as a wholesome activity to the body. Exercise without such stimulus becomes monotonous, and ceases to have a beneficial effect on either mind or body.

ON DANCING, IN ITS MORE LIMITED SENSE.

WHEN a firm walk and good carriage are attained, the movements ordinarily comprehended in the term Dancing may be commenced. Many persons will here perhaps observe, that they agree with my observations so far, but they are not prepared to go further in adopting Dancing as an Educational Exercise; but I trust to be able to convince them, as my experience has convinced me, that *here* some of its greatest advantages only commence. What other exercise is there capable of such elegant variety? What other system calls the motive powers into such harmonious action? What other recreation gives such a cheerful tone to the mind? And what other art, useful or ornamental, serves so

much as a softener of asperity of manner, or opens the heart so freely to emit or to receive all our nature's most kindly influences? The evils of over mental education may be entirely prevented by the adoption of Dancing as an every day amusement. When children seem weary and *distract* with over study, let the Piano sound its note of invitation for the Dance. The pallid cheek will soon regain its roses; the listless form will spring up into life and activity; the eye that drooped with dulness will sparkle with animation; and the mind "like a giant refreshed" will return with alacrity to the task it a few moments before looked upon with *ennui* and disgust. Has the reader ever visited an Infant School? There this system is acted upon. When the little creatures shew signs of weariness, they are sent for a short time into the playground, and they return with all their faculties reinvigorated to their tasks. Why is so natural and

sensible a system only pursued with the poorer classes, when its advantages are so obvious for all? That Dancing is a ready means of breaking the irksomeness of study appears to me a sufficient reason in favour of its more extended use; and, where it has been adopted, its beneficial results have been unfailing.

I may be asked here, what style of Dancing I would recommend. I reply, in the first place a few preliminary movements must be practised, such as *Assemblés*, &c., to give more activity than the slower exercises would do; then the few and elegant steps necessary for the *Quadrille*, in which the *glissade* should be most conspicuous. When this is accomplished, the *Minuets d'Exaudet* and *de la Cour* will give the highest degree of finish of which the art is susceptible. I may here venture to remark that at the present time I have two pupils, one aged six, the other eight years, who

dance the Minuet de la Cour to perfection; and I feel sure that it has so imbued all their movements with grace, that it will be almost impossible for them ever to fall into awkward habits.

The position of the arms in Room Dancing is a point that should be especially attended to, and here, as in the position of the feet, Nature should be the monitress. The natural position of the arms is rather in front of the body, with the palms of the hands turned towards the legs. The dress should be lightly taken by the first finger and thumb, and well held out at the sides, so that an opening may be seen between the figure and arms from under the shoulder to the tip of the thumbs: this gives lightness to the figure, and allows the curves formed by the waist and hips to be seen. The dress, at the same that it is held out at the sides, should be slightly advanced, so that it may not be in the way of the feet.

This description will, doubtless, bring to the reader's memory, by the force of contrast, the position too often witnessed in our Ball Rooms : there you will see the dress clutched by handsfull, the arms stretched backwards, and (as I observed in speaking of drilling) being beyond the centre of gravity, the head is poked forward to counterbalance their weight, so as to preserve equilibrium. This position, monstrous as it may seem, I know is actually taught to young ladies as "stylish and fashionable !"

Artists have long since discovered that angles in the female form are destructive of grace, and that the curve is the line of beauty. This, then, must be our rule ; and whether the arms are pendant as in holding the dress, or raised as in the act of giving the hand, or resting on a partner's shoulder as in the Valse, they should always present more or less the form of a curved line.

As regards the dances of society, such as Polkas, Valses à deux temps, &c., &c., in my opinion they are very unfitted for children; but for persons who are of an age to frequent Ball Rooms, they are in themselves, if properly taught and properly danced, unexceptionable. A young lady, with a well-regulated mind and a proper degree of self-respect, will not only dance with propriety herself, but be the cause of propriety in others. That these Dances have caused Dancing to be deprecated is but too true, but it has been Dancing in its most abused form; for that it can be abused, like any other most innocent or necessary act, I of course readily admit. And I would ask those who do so abuse it, what enjoyment there can be in rushing up and down a room, to the danger of yourself and all you meet with? what elegance can there be in being tightly clasped in a gentleman's arms, the lady's chin projecting over his shoulder?

what pleasure in being pushed backwards and swung round until a palpitating heart and a fevered frame compel you to sink exhausted to your seat? This is one of the abuses of Dancing: another is its being so often carried on in overcrowded and over-heated rooms, to the manifest danger of serious and even fatal consequences. The Dancing I advocate is the impromptu quadrille in the family circle, or on the green sward at the social fête champêtre. The following extract from Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, will beautifully illustrate its tendency. It is from the Chapter entitled "*The Grace*:"—

"When supper was over, the old man gave a knock upon the table with the haft of his knife to bid them prepare for the dance. The moment the signal was given, the women and girls ran all together into a back apartment to tie up their hair, and the young men to the door to wash their faces and

change their sabots; and in three minutes every soul was ready upon a little esplanade before the house to begin. The old man and his wife came out last, and placing me betwixt them sat down upon a sofa of turf by the door.

“The old man had some fifty years ago been no mean performer upon the vielle; and, at the age he then was of, touched it well enough for the purpose. His wife sang now and then to the tune — then intermitted — and joined her old man again as their children and grandchildren danced before them.

“It was not till the middle of the second dance, when, for some pauses in the movement wherein they all seemed to look up, I fancied I could distinguish an elevation of spirit different from that which is the cause or the effect of simple jollity. In a word, I thought I beheld *Religion* mixing in the dance; but as I had never seen her so engaged, I should have looked upon it now as one of the illu-

sions of an imagination which is eternally misleading me, had not the old man, as soon as the dance was ended, said, that this was their constant way; and that all his life long he had made it a rule, after supper was over, to call out his family to dance and rejoice; believing, he said, that a cheerful and contented mind was the best sort of thanks to heaven that an illiterate peasant could pay.

“Or a learned prelate either, said I.”

ON DEFORMITIES TOO GREAT FOR MERE
DANCING EXERCISES.

BUT often, too often, alas! cases are submitted for my opinion, in which the evils of over education of the mind at the expense of the body are so settled and inveterate, that other remedies must be resorted to to set the figure right again; and here the assistance of the Calisthenic Exercises and other mechanical means must be called to our aid. The great and growing frequency of such cases has induced me to pay much and anxious attention to the causes of distortion and to the methods to be adopted for their cure. To understand them (without which no lady can be a competent Dancing mistress) I have made myself acquainted with the

general anatomy of the body, and have passed much time in visiting the Gymnasia in Germany and France, in studying their different systems, and in selecting their best apparatus: the results have been not less gratifying to my feelings than conducive to my advancement in my profession. To render an Exercise Lesson effective, it is desirable that the pupil should have every possible variety of apparatus, that all the muscles and limbs may be, according to their different requirements, acted upon, and that the tediousness of monotony may never be experienced. The apparatus best adapted for straightening the spine is the horizontal swing, from which the body is suspended by the hands, the weight of the lower extremities serving to pull the vertebræ into a straight line, while the muscles of the loins are at the same time strengthened by the efforts to support the body. Another extremely valuable apparatus is

the "*Bascule brachiale*," a pulley-swing invented by Colonel Amaros, the founder of the *Gymnase Civile et Militaire* at Paris. He describes its object in these words:—"I have invented this Exercise for persons who lead a literary or sedentary life, who have often asked me for an easy means of breaking the irksomeness of the position to which they are condemned in fulfilling the duties of their situations, or in following their own studious inclinations. There is no position more unhealthy, or more calculated to shorten man's life, than that of having the body bent towards the knees, the chest contracted, the head inclined to the desk, resting with the elbows on a table, and this to be persevered in for three, four, and sometimes eight hours at a time. All the principal functions of organic or internal life are deranged; respiration, circulation, and digestion suffer while the functions of animal or exterior life are re-

duced to a slight movement of the right hand and arm."

This exercise is used by two persons who alternately pull each other from the floor. It is eminently a strengthening exercise; it draws the vertebræ into their right places, equalises the shoulders and hips, calls into strong action the muscles of the arms, back, and legs. It has also the invaluable property of being an amusing exercise; and as such is peculiarly adapted to the study and nursery. Exercises with the Indian Sceptres, Poles, and Cost's Chest Expanders should be interspersed with the more fatiguing movements, and a system of inclined planes adopted, that even when the pupil is resting she may be resting in a remedial position. The most perfect invention I have seen is the "*Prone Couch*" invented by Mr. Cole, surgeon at the Orthopedic Hospital. It is not only a reclining board on the best principle, but by several ingenious

arrangements it is made to contain a variety of apparatus for exercising the different muscles of the arms and back.

I have seen such extraordinary results from the constant use of this couch, combined with the great variety of other apparatus with which my Exercise Room is fitted up, that I feel certain few cases of curvature of the spine unattended with disease would withstand their influence.

Before I conclude this portion of my subject, I must observe that Exercises, to effect what is expected from them, *must be practised daily*. Two or three times a week will not undo the evil engendered by the work of bad positions for months and years. I am often answered, when I make this remark, "Oh, but my daughter has so much to attend to, that we cannot spare the time." There is but one answer to this—either time must be found, or no beneficial results expected. Is the body of no

account? Of what avail will be all the knowledge the mind can acquire, if, through the frailty of the body, it can never be usefully employed? Is this unnatural forcing of the mind at the expence of the body likely to improve the child's chance of happiness? Think of the destiny of women. Look a little into the vista of life. Is this the training fitted to make them happy wives or healthy mothers? Look around! How many a home is saddened by a sickly wife! How many a child neglected, for want of the tender watching of a mother,—that mother chained to her couch by evils engendered in early youth, through constant violation of Nature's laws! And is it not worth the sacrifice of some little extra time to prevent such ills as these? The body requires but little, but will not have that little withheld from it with impunity. Read the following impressive lines from the *American Annals of Education*:—"Three

hundred and seventy-five muscles, organs of motion, have been robbed of their appropriate action for nine or ten years, and now they have become, alike with the rest of the frame, the prey of near one hundred and fifty diseased and irritable nerves." And again : — " When thought shall need no brain, and nearly four hundred organs of motion shall cease to constitute the principal portion of the human body, then may the student dispense with muscular exertion."

One of the most satisfactory cases I have met with, was that of a young lady aged seventeen, very tall, her muscles soft, and her hue pallid and unhealthy. She had been severely taxing a most active mind, and quite neglecting exercise in any form ; consequently her spine had given way and a double lateral curvature had taken place ; the deformity was perceptible in every attitude of the body, and even the face was distorted. Fortunately,

my pupil possessed strong intelligence; and her mother aided me with all a mother's energy when she really perceived that her child's welfare was in question. The first difficulties—those of infusing hope, and convincing the young lady that perseverance would assuredly conquer—were more easily, than in general, got over. She first attended at my house for one hour early every morning, beginning of course with simple movements, and gradually proceeding to more difficult ones. In a month, a decided change had taken place; her muscles had become firmer, her appetite and general health had wonderfully improved, and the wan and unhealthy hue of her face had gradually disappeared, while the spine was evidently becoming straighter. The body being stronger, we tried two hours a day; and, in three months, her back was so straight that her figure was an object of admiration, and no person could suspect that any deformity had ever existed.

By perseverance in this course she became so strong and active that there is little danger of her relapsing, especially as she has had a small gymnasium fitted up for her at home as an amusement. I cite this case to prove that even far advanced stages of spinal curvature may be cured, if the necessary time and perseverance are devoted to that purpose.

There is one very insidious aid to physical deformity—I mean, stays. The evils resulting from them have been made so apparent by the pens of distinguished medical writers, that I shall only state that I invariably urge their wear being discontinued by all ladies, old and young, who come to me for lessons; and I am happy to say that the ease and comfort consequent on their removal give great hope that all those who have discarded them will never again resume them, or allow of their being worn where they have any influence.

The only "support" required is a close-fitting body of stout jean made to lace up *in front*, as the act of reaching behind to lace ordinary stays is one of the causes of the right shoulder being so often larger than the left. Nature has given to us all the bones we require; and be assured, that to add others, is "to gild refined gold, or paint the lily." Let those bones act, and they will strengthen as the body grows; case them in stays and keep them constantly in inaction, and they become so enfeebled that, even with stays, they fail to preserve the body erect.



DANCING, AS IT AFFECTS THE MIND.

I have now to speak of Dancing as a means of influencing the character or dispositions of children. It would be vain for a pupil to learn all I have been describing if one thing were forgotten, and that one Politeness. In vain would a young lady acquire a good carriage, a graceful walk, and perfect facility in the Dances I have particularized: her physical education would be sadly deficient, if she had not acquired that grace which prompts her to avoid offence to others by word or deed. This is, in my opinion, a most important part of Physical Education, in the more comprehensive view I take of it. But is not this one of the outward things too often slighted and forgotten? It should be a home les-

son, a lesson of the nursery, of the fireside, of the table, as well as of the drawing room; and it is one of those things which, if not attended to in early life, will, in many individuals, never become habitual. It is another sacrifice to the desire of being considered a "clever young lady."

Your "clever young lady" may be brusque in her manner to those around her, and regardless of the feelings of any but herself; awkward in entering a room, and clumsy in leaving it; haughty in her intercourse with her inferiors, and sillily shy with her superiors: yet she is a "clever young lady." She can talk French, German, and Italian, can draw to perfection, and play on the Piano Forte most brilliantly; but she does not know the language of sympathy or kindness, and the music of an approving conscience at some sacrifice of self for another's happiness is strange to her. Look at her at a season when her accomplishments are value-

less—what is she then? In manner, habits, even in dress, you will be constantly reminded that, however educated the mind and enlightened the intellect, the body and the heart have been most painfully neglected.

As the idea of Dancing having an influence on the mind may appear to many novel and untenable, instead of lengthening my own arguments I will borrow the following able ones of Dr. Andrew Combe, from his "*Physiology applied to the improvement of Mental and Physical Education*:"—

"In acquiring readiness and forming habits, we merely turn to account that organic law which associates increased aptitude, animation, and vigour with regular exercise. It is not the soul, or abstract principle of the mind, which is thus changed, but simply the organic medium through which it is destined to act. In physical education we are quite alive to the advantages of repetition and

practice. We know that if practice in dancing, fencing, skating and riding be persevered in for a sufficient length of time to give the muscles the requisite promptitude and harmony of action, the power will be ever afterwards retained, although little called into use; whereas, if we stop short of this point, we may reiterate practice by fits and starts without any proportionate advancement. The same principle applies equally to the moral and intellectual powers, because these operate by means of material organs.

“The necessity of being in private what we wish to appear in public springs from the same rule. If we wish to be polite, just, kind, and sociable, we must habitually act under the influence of the corresponding sentiments in the domestic circle and in every-day life, as well as in the company of strangers and on great occasions. It is the daily practice which gives ready activity to the

sentiments, and marks the character. If we indulge in vulgarity of speech and behaviour at home, and put on politeness merely for the reception of strangers, the former will show through the mask which is intended to hide them; because the habitual association, to which the organs and faculties have been accustomed, cannot thus be controlled. As well may we hope to excel in elegant and graceful Dancing by the daily practice of every awkward attitude. In the one case, as in the other, the organs must not only be associated in action by the command of the will, but also be habituated to the association by the frequency of the practice; a fact which exposes the ignorant folly of those parents who habitually act with rudeness and caprice towards their children, and then chide the latter for unpolite behaviour towards strangers."

This education of "the organic medium through

which the soul is destined to act" is then a part of the duties of a Dancing mistress. In her lessons, the greatest courtesy should be observed on all occasions. In entering a room, or on taking her seat, a pupil should be accustomed to move without hesitation or precipitancy; in her manner with her teacher and companions, she should be encouraged in every manifestation of the desire to sacrifice her own convenience for that of others; taught that a lady, in the proper acceptance of the term, can never lose an iota of the consideration due to her rank and station, by courtesy to the humblest in the grades of society, — and that one who is a lady in name only can never acquire respect, however she may fancy that austerity and hauteur throw an air of importance around her.

The difference between the curtsy on entering a room, and the bow of recognition in passing a friend in the promenade or the ball-room, should

be clearly pointed out, as many ladies make themselves appear affected by curtseying while walking in the street; whereas, the bend of the knees peculiar to the curtsey should only be used when stationary, as, for example, when an introduction to an individual takes place, or in the moment's interval which occurs while opening a door on leaving a room. The bow should always be made when in motion, and is generally more easy and natural on entering a room than the curtsey, when the pause necessary for the latter may subject a lady to be run against by persons following her.

From these hints it is clear that Dancing can, and should, play a prominent part in moulding the character of children; that it conduces to the cultivation of the gentler feelings and to the amelioration of the harsher ones; in brief, that it causes the pupil to feel like a lady, and will, as a necessary consequence, ensure her acting like one.

DANCING FOR BOYS.

How often do I hear mothers complain of the *gaucherie* of their sons, and sisters of the ungentelemanly coarseness of their brothers! Why is this? Is it not because a boy's whole attention is concentrated on mental acquirements, and that no time is given to the education of the body? A gentleman, much and deservedly esteemed for his skill in the management of youth, has lamented to me, that, from the child of six to the young man of eighteen, the requirements of parents compel teachers to sacrifice on the shrine of the classics almost every branch of useful literature. To such an extent is this carried that a boy, when he leaves school, however well able to construe Greek and

Latin, is almost ignorant of the Poets, the Historians, and the Philosophers of his own country ; and consequently has, literally, to commence the education fitted to make him a man of the world, or to hold his station with credit to himself in any profession, save, perhaps, the "learned" ones. If so many mental accomplishments are neglected, we cannot wonder that bodily ones are thought quite unnecessary. If a boy takes to school with him some little polish from his mother's boudoir, the contact with his rough young companions soon rubs it off. If he withstands the entrainment of example, ridicule, that dreaded weapon, is brought to bear against him, and the soubriquets dandy, &c., are showered upon him until he becomes afraid to do any act of common politeness.

Dancing, I maintain, (not mere jumping about, but the art of moving and behaving like a gentleman,) would prevent this deterioration. But to

do so, it must be raised in the estimation of the heads of schools. It must have its allotted portion of time like any other lesson; and boys must be taught that rudeness and coarseness are totally opposed to the free and frank manners of a gentleman. The difficulty in getting a proper degree of attention bestowed on the Dancing lesson is a common complaint with masters. The boys are led, by example, to consider it a thing of no importance — that it may be sacrificed to the most trivial inconvenience it may occasion. It is nearly always forced upon the pupils in their play hours, when, with the merry shouts of their companions ringing in their ears from the play ground, it is impossible that the lesson can be otherwise than distasteful; and thus it is passed without benefit to the pupil, and with every possible annoyance to the teacher.

Picture to yourself an emancipated school-boy

making his débüt in Society; can any being be more awkward? His instinctive knowledge of his own deficiencies makes him an object of anguish to himself and of commiseration to others. His arms seem in his own way, and his legs in the way of every body else. And yet how simple the remedy! Until Dancing has its proper value set upon it in Schools, I would advise every parent to have his sons taught only in a Dancing Academy where proper etiquette is observed.

The movements necessary for a gentleman are very simple; the characteristics of his Dancing should be firmness and freedom, as those of a lady should be lightness and grace; all extreme positions, such as turning the feet out into straight lines or crossing them to the "*fifth position*," should be carefully avoided in gentlemen's Dancing, as they can scarcely ever be accomplished save with a bent knee,—and thus, an unfailling

cause of an awkward appearance is encouraged instead of prevented.

The neglect of the advantages of Dancing, for giving or keeping up some little refinement in the manners of young gentlemen, has doubtless arisen in a very great degree from the utter inefficiency of many of those persons who pretend to teach it. If my ideas of what Room Dancing really comprehends are correct, it at least requires that the art should have been practised and studied: but very many teachers have never learned more than the merest rudiments—they are simply amateurs—and, because they have attained a certain facility in turning round in a Polka or Valse, desert their work-tables or counters, and imagine themselves fitted to become the corporeal educators of young ladies and gentlemen.

I love my profession, because I have found that it can be the means of dispensing much that is

good, and of warding off much that is evil. I would therefore wish to see it freed from all things that may cause it to be objected to. I would shield it from the vulgarity of the Casino, as well as from the extravagance of the Stage. Unless this is done; unless our teachers of Dancing themselves help to raise their art, by making their lessons more valued; and unless those who have the education of youth see the necessity of more attention to outward forms, I fear that Dancing will soon have no man of refined or gentlemanly feeling who will condescend to teach it.

The decline of private schools is one of the great causes of this neglect of gentlemanly behaviour in boys. When the eye of a lady superintends the domestic arrangements, I have for the most part observed that the manners of the boys are less objectionable: the boys, then, instead of being sent with dirty clothes and dirty persons into a dirty

school-room, are required to be at least clean; their gloves and shoes are prepared for them; and such things as these, slight and trivial as they may appear, have the greatest possible effect in aiding the teacher of Dancing in his arduous avocations.

That my animadversions on the manners of our rising youth are not uncalled for is, I think, sufficiently evident. In their homes, in the streets, in their intercourse with others, in their different avocations, this neglect of external education is visible in the manners of young men. Read the valedictory address of Sir Charles Napier to the Indian army; and that will prove how little fitted are our young men, as now educated, to take upon themselves the active duties of life, and will warrant me in reminding them of the observation by Lord Chesterfield, that "the scholar without good breeding is a pedant, the philosopher a cynic, the soldier a brute, and every man disagreeable."

CONCLUSION.

I now approach, with some diffidence, the most delicate portion of my subject ; and that is the enquiry, Why is Dancing so deprecated on religious grounds? As I remarked in the early pages of this book, Dancing is merely action in a poetic garb ; it is measured motion, just as singing is melodious speaking. These movements, at first impulsive, have been submitted to certain rules ; and through the alembic of Time have come to us in two forms—one dramatic, the other social,—the former being quite distinct from the latter. In its latter form it is used as an exercise for the body, as a cheerful recreation to relieve the mind, and as a means, combined with music,

of forming a social amusement when friends and neighbours meet together. Fordyce, in his Sermons to Young Women, says, "I freely confess that I am one of those who look on with a very sensible satisfaction, well pleased to see a company of young persons joyful with innocence and happy with each other. It seems to me there can be no impropriety in it, any more than modulating the voice unto the most agreeable tones in singing, to which none, I think, will object. What is Dancing, in the most rigid sense, but the harmony of motion rendered more palpable: awkwardness or rusticity or ungraceful gestures can never, surely, be meritorious."

If it is objected that Dancing leads to frivolity and dissipation, I would reply, that, being in itself a natural, innocent, and commendable amusement, it must not be censured because it is abused. What is there not open to abuse? What things

are there not abused? Do the most serious escape? "Where is that temple wherein vile things sometimes intrude not?" Shall we leave off walking, talking, eating, drinking, or meeting our fellow creatures at all, because evil sometimes results from such acts? I would humbly suggest another method. Let our pastors and teachers not emulate the hermits of old, and seclude themselves from the world, but let them watch over their flocks even in their amusements; their very presence will serve to scare away the evils which cause such amusements to be deprecated. Let not the parable of the prodigal son be forgotten, where Dancing is spoken of as one of the means used to celebrate the return of the wanderer to his father's hearth.

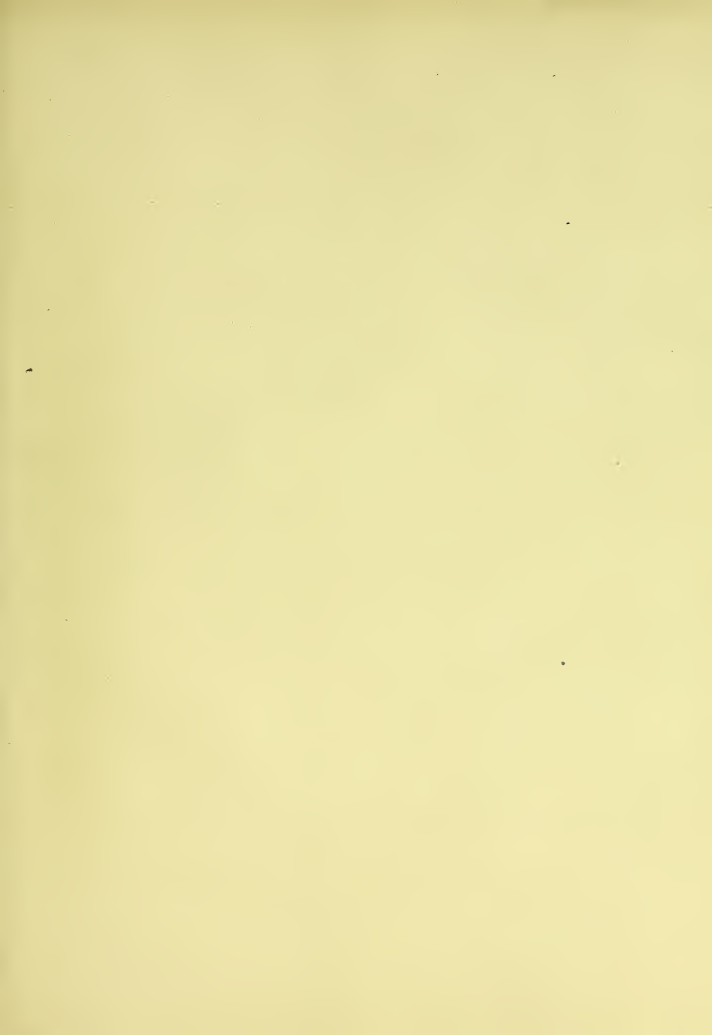
In conclusion, I trust that, in my remarks on what I consider a proper system of instruction in Room Dancing, I have so expressed myself as not

to give pain to any other teacher; that I may be the means of saving some mothers from the stings of self-reproach, for having, by neglecting Nature's laws, brought Nature's punishments upon their children; that I may have convinced my juvenile readers that Dancing comprehends many things of much consequence to them, which, if properly appreciated and practised, give a grace to the mind as well as to the body; and, lastly, that I may have reminded my more serious friends that there is "a Time to Dance," and that such time, well used, may be productive of the most beneficial and the most important results.

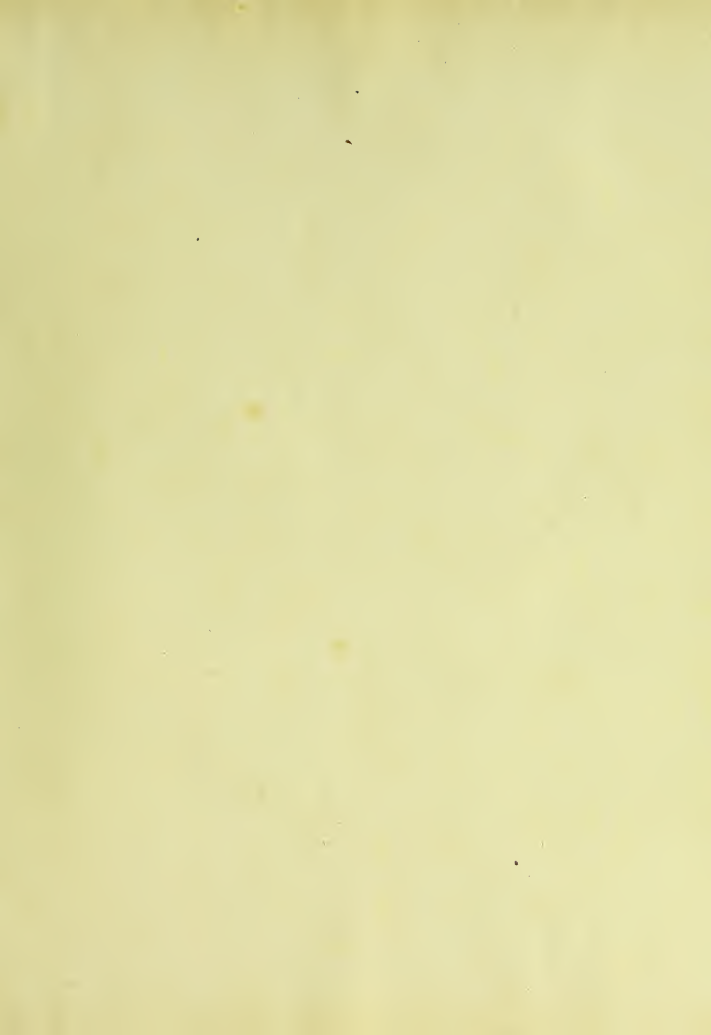
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